

## **A report on our visit to Rob and Ria Gmyrek in April, 1999**

John and Jackie Matthews



Dear Church Upon The Rock Family,

Thank you for praying for us during our travel to see Rob and Ria. We had an excellent journey, and felt blessed in every way as we carried out our visit to them - a pastoral mission trip, you might say.

### ***Letting their light shine...and shine...and shine...***

During this visit with them, we saw more clearly than ever how the Lord opens up previously resistant people to the gospel. Jesus said it plainly: *“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”* We spent much of the time with Rob and Ria watching their light shine before the many people around them.

From sunrise until late at night, the key to their life is people, people, people. We saw them loving people, helping people, caring for people, feeding people, training and leading people, and transporting people. We saw them listening to their problems, having fun with them, finding reasons to celebrate with them, having discreet prayer times, and when the Lord opened the door, sharing with them the good news of Jesus. They are also in constant communication by phone and Email with people from around the world who are working or planning to work with the Chantik. Most meals in their house find 15 or 20 people at their tables. A meal may include Muslim young women who work in the sewing business, workers who run the chicken farm, national "m's" working with them, other foreign long term "m's", or perhaps a Muslim neighbor. This is apart from people like us — most months they are housing visiting teams of some sort. Their home is a revolving door of love, hospitality, joy, tears, work, care, and prayer.

How do people reach the Chantik, a people for whom it is illegal to be a Christian, to whom it is illegal to witness or evangelize? We saw how it is done. Love people; be more concerned for others than for yourself. Be kind and friendly to all those you meet, and be ready to invite any of them to your home. Isn't that just like Jesus would do it?

### ***Birthdays for Jesus...***

Ria loves hospitality; she is perfectly suited to the role the Lord has given her. Every month she has a birthday party for any of the national Christian workers or Chantik workers who were born during that month. We were privileged to be there for the April birthday party for four people. You must realize that most likely none of them EVER had a birthday celebration before, probably no one had EVER celebrated their life in any way.

This was a surprise party given in Danny and Hannah's home in the village. (Hannah oversees the quilting project; Danny oversees the chicken farm.) Thirty people were there, one third of them Muslim. We all sat on mats on the floor, men on one side, women on the other side. Few spoke any English. The walls were decorated with four large posters made from newsprint paper and colored markers honoring each birthday person. There were crepe paper streamers and clusters of balloons (They were not very colorful, but the best that were available).

Jackie reports on the party: *“At some point Ria told everybody I would lead them in playing a game. It was news to me; I was caught off guard. What game would you suggest that would work cross culturally without English? I decided we'd play “button, button, who's got the button?” Pretty lame choice, I guess, but we actually had a wonderful time! They laughed and laughed — **life doesn't get any better than this, in my opinion!** Several women were wearing traditional head coverings (“jillbobs”), which was a constant reminder of WHY we were there! After gifts for each — a simple brightly colored tee-shirt and lipstick for each — they blew out the candles on a simple 9 X 13 birthday cake. When the trick candles refused to completely extinguish, the room shrieked with laughter! Ria prayed a short blessing on them. The party soon came to an end as many of them had to leave quickly to get home before dark and the next Muslim call to prayer.”*

We began to see that there are endless ways to “let your light shine”, when you really love those around you!

### ***There is a cost to letting your light shine...***

There is a cost to this way of living. The problems of people become your problems. You live to serve their needs. Here are a few examples among dozens that we observed with Rob and Ria:

\*saving the life of a young unwed mother and baby destined to be killed by her family. (Jackie joyfully held this child while there!)

\*being asked by one of the richest Muslim businessmen in the country — because of him observing your work ethics — to teach good business ethics to his aimless adult son.

\*loving an unsaved worker and exposing her to your peaceful Christian home, so that she wants to stay long after her work is done, eating and playing games with

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your family rather than going to her own home. (Mind you, when those like her are in the house, you don't use words like "church" or "missionary" or other topics that might cause offense or alarm.

\*being asked by your neighbors to every wedding, funeral, or family celebration — and you go.

\*having sixty or more of those same unsaved neighbors in your house at Easter, showing the Jesus film, and being privileged to tell them the story of Easter — because they know you and love you.

Watching the love and light of Jesus flow through Rob and Ria's daily lives, people who live or work with them frequently start asking for prayer and asking about Jesus. We could see in this house firsthand the true call of pioneer "m's" in the Muslim world. It means living among the people, loving them, letting them into your life, serving their needs, and letting "your light shine before people in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

It is a WHOLE lifestyle...ALL of you...ALL of your time...ALL you have...ALL you are.

#### ***Chickens for Jesus...***

Workers from other parts of the country, Christians from other ethnic groups than the Chantik, have joined Rob and Ria. And there are more ready to come. All need proper places to live and work, so that they can "let their light shine" as well among the Chantik. Some of these are working with the chicken farm situated near a small village. Rob and Ria, with these national workers, have worked hard to see this small business begin. The chicken project is excellent for village settings, and can earn enough profit to support those who work with it. The national workers ("m's") live in the village, work on the farm, alongside Muslim villagers whom they employ. The small parcel of rented land where the chickens are being raised was considered cursed by the local people — nothing would prosper there for many years. Now they see the land prospering, not only with chickens, but with all the vegetables and crops that can be squeezed on the land. It has become a gathering place for the villagers, who enjoy bringing their families for picnics and just "hanging out" with the believers running the farm. This has become another way of "letting their light shine..."

With more nationals soon to join the team, there is not room to expand this farm any further. So another place is needed to have another farm!

#### ***Some land for Jesus...***

Some beautiful land has been made available for purchase. It is between some small villages, hidden from public view and surrounded by mountains. Filled with hundreds of fruit and nut trees, there is a fresh stream of water running through it and a deep well full of water. There is plenty of room for raising chickens and growing

vegetables. Furthermore, it can be a place of refuge and discipleship without attracting public attention. We visited the property, which looked like a mini-garden of Eden that simply needs fresh grooming. It was teeming with life — plants, birds, animals, and water. It seemed to us to be the Lord's property for them. Just consider it: a place for new team members to live and work, and a place of refuge and discipleship for Chantik and other young national believers! The entire parcel can be purchased, including getting a new road and electricity into the property for less than \$10,000! This will be a great breakthrough (and lots of new work) for Rob and Ria and the young team of national believers who have gathered around them to help reach the Chantik. Please pray for God's wisdom and for the funds to purchase the land. *We highly recommend this project for anyone who is led to invest in the end-time harvest!*

#### ***Quilting for Jesus...***

In the backyard of Rob and Ria's home is a small one room building used for quilting. It is perhaps 15 ft. square, with screened walls, marble floor and a corrugated metal roof. Several classic Singer sewing machines are humming all day. In this room crammed with ironing board, cutting table, quilt stretcher and sewing table, work eight young women every day doing beautiful quilting which Ria has taught them to do. Nimble fingers fly as they finely stitch by hand and machine, producing gorgeous quilts for beds, tables and Christmas decorations. The products are exported to the USA. Most of these women are Muslim, 18-20 years old. The rest are national believers, "m's" on Rob and Ria's team. Ria feeds them lunch every day. The Muslim ladies enjoy being there so much that it is common for them to linger long after their work day is done.

#### ***May our light shine also!***

Our time with Rob and Ria and their team left us challenged to be more of a witness in our own community back home. Are we as willing to give our all for the sake of the gospel where we live? Many of our neighbors (and yours) are as lost as these Muslims. "Help us, Lord, to be salt and light wherever we are. May we be hospitable, loving and kind to all we meet....that some may come to Jesus our Savior."

*In the 1700's, two young Moravian men shouted back to their loved ones, as they left the shore of their homeland to give their lives for the salvation of distant slaves, "May the Lamb that was slain receive the reward of His sufferings!" Souls — people saved from sin and transformed by His grace — souls are the rewards of His suffering. May Jesus the Lamb receive such rewards through our lives and yours.*

With love,

***John and Jackie***